



NEWS

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TREE KILLING BEETLE FOUND IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – A destructive pest that feasts on ash trees has been confirmed in two new Illinois counties. The emerald ash borer (EAB) recently was discovered just north of Salem in Marion County and at the Green Creek Rest Area on Interstate 57 in Effingham County. The beetle now has been confirmed in 20 counties in Illinois, with the latest detections being the first time the insect has been located in southern Illinois.

The emerald ash borer is a small, metallic-green beetle native to Asia. Its larvae burrow into the bark of ash trees, causing the trees to starve and eventually die. While the beetle does not pose any direct risk to public health, it does threaten the ash tree canopy.

Currently, there are 25 counties in the northeastern and central part of the state included in an EAB quarantine issued by the Illinois Department of Agriculture to prevent the “man-made” spread of the beetle; however, Marion and Effingham counties are not within those quarantine boundaries.

“With these latest finds, the quarantine boundaries will need to be adjusted. However, changes will not be made until all the purple traps that were placed throughout the state to monitor the movement of the beetle have been harvested and analyzed,” Warren Goetsch, IDOA bureau chief of Environmental Programs, said. “EAB is a sneaky traveler, which is why it is important that everyone, even those counties not currently inside the quarantine zone, put the quarantine guidelines into practice by keeping all firewood and untreated wood products from movement outside of its county of origin.”

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The EAB detection in Marion County resulted from a find on one of those monitoring traps. The trap was located in a rural residential area situated about a mile east of I-57 and a mile north of US 50. While the IDOA was making a visit to the site, staff observed distressed ash trees in Effingham County along the I-57 corridor. When they stopped to inspect the trees they found live EAB larvae.

“EAB detections are occurring with increasing frequency along major highways and railways or near major intersections, which suggests that the stealthy beetle may be spreading to new locations through transportation corridors,” EAB Program Manager Scott Schirmir said. “We can determine with relative certainty that these infestations occurred before any quarantines were put in place, so there is no suspicion of violation.”

With these recent finds in southern Illinois, IDOA officials strongly encourage a heightened awareness of stressed and weakened ash trees. Local and regional tree companies, villages and cities should consider the Illinois Department of Agriculture's compliance agreement program and familiarize themselves with rules and regulations pertaining to the processing and transport of ash materials.

The emerald ash borer is difficult to detect, especially in newly-infested trees. Citizens should watch for metallic-green beetles about half the diameter of a penny on or near ash trees that are showing signs of disease or stress. Other signs of infestation in ash trees include D-shaped holes in the bark of the trunk or branches and shoots growing from its base.

Since the emerald ash borer was first confirmed in the Midwest in the summer of 2002, more than 25 million ash trees have been felled by the beetle. Anyone who suspects a tree has been infested is urged to contact either their county Extension office or village forester. For more information, visit www.IllinoisEAB.com.